

METHOD OF MAKING A DECORATIVE ARRANGEMENT

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application serial number 10/672,449 entitled "METHOD OF MAKING A DECORATIVE ARRANGEMENT" filed September 26, 2003 claiming the benefit of United States Provisional Application Serial Number 60/415,663, entitled "METHOD OF MAKING A DECORATIVE ARRANGEMENT" filed October 3, 2002.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a method of making decorative arrangements which are initially formed within a wet foam which is subsequently dried to establish a rigid foam within which a plurality of decorative elements are securely retained.

2. Description of the Prior Art

In the floral business, it is common to provide various sorts of decorative arrangements which may consist of (a) arrangements of fresh flowers or other fresh vegetation, such as ferns, for example, or (b) dried flowers or other types of dried vegetation, or (c) artificial flowers or other types of artificial vegetation with or without additional ornamental objects. It has also been known to provide various combinations of the foregoing.

It has been known to provide for decorative purposes within buildings and on porches and patios, combinations of living plants assembled in soil in a suitable container as in a "dish garden." It has also been known to cut living plants and to provide arrangements which have a more limited life expectancy. Such arrangements may be as simple as cut flowers presented in a suitable vase containing water.

It has been known to employ preformed rigid resinous foam as a means for facilitating relative positioning of real or artificial flowers or plants, or combinations thereof, in creating

a decorative arrangement. Among the problems encountered in connection with the use of such rigid foam, such as styrofoam, for example, is the difficulty in inserting stems of flowers into the foam without breaking the foam or the stems. It has also been known to employ picks which have a nail-like penetrating base at the lower end for penetrating the rigid foam and an upwardly open receptacle for receipt of the flowers. A further problem with such rigid foam arrangements is the fact that certain fragile flowers cannot be introduced into the foam without damage to the flowers. It is difficult, for example, to employ hydrangea or baby's breath with such materials. This inability serves to place a limit on artistic creativity and aesthetic benefits of the arrangement.

It has also been known to provide preformed rigid foam which can be soaked in water with fresh flowers being inserted into the foam. Suitable products for this purpose are those sold under the trade designation Ultrafoam or Oasis.

It has been known to create wreaths from any of the above-described materials through the use of a wire frame to which the decorative members are secured. One problem with such arrangements is that it is a very labor-intensive, time-consuming job. Such wreaths are frequently created by providing rigid foam within portions of the wreath frame and inserting wreath components into the rigid foam. It has also been known to use a hot melt glue to secure the decorative portions to the frame. Similarly, in making swags, a number of the foregoing difficulties have been encountered with the result being substantial investment of time in creating the arrangements and the relatively high cost due to the labor-intensive nature of the chore.

It has been known to provide an artificial plant in a large floor supported container by the introduction of foam into the container with or without other materials, such as underlying gravel, for example, in the pot for purposes of stabilizing the plant position within the pot.

U. S. Patent 5,235,780 discloses a frame for supporting living plants. German patent 3042429 discloses a flower vase filled with rigid foam block which may be polyurethane foam cast into the case. Plants, twigs and other items may be secured within the foam. One
5 the problems with such foam is that more fragile plants, such as baby's breath, for example, require insertion of a pick into the foam with the hollow pick receiving the stem of the plant.

French patent 2454752 discloses placing a hardenable material within a container with pins inserted for reinforcement. Film is provided thereover to maintain the material in a soft condition. Removal of the film is said to permit insertion of stems of flowers and similar
10 items into the material before it dries. The material is not highly visible in view of its being positioned within a container and having a plurality of flowers concealing the same.

French patent 2693092 discloses a process of first molding a block of chemical foam after which it is placed in a bath of wet plaster to provide a covering therearound. It has been known to provide various forms of vases containing materials into which plant material may
15 be placed for decorative purposes. See Aquacotta literature.

There remains, therefore, a very real and substantial need for a method of simply and effectively creating decorative arrangements.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 The present invention has solved the above-described problems by providing a rapid and efficient cost-effective method of making a decorative arrangement. The method includes providing a wet foam which is permitted to partially cure to create a nodule, after which a plurality of decorative elements are secured thereto with subsequent curing permitting the nodule to cure fully. It is preferred that the nodule assume a highly visible position within the
25 decorative arrangement. The wet foam prior to insertion of decorative elements may be wet as by spraying water thereon. It may also be wet after such partial curing as by spraying water thereon. The partially cured wet foam or nodule may be shaped to the desired

configuration prior to insertion of the decorative elements and, subsequent to curing, may be subjected to decorative physical changes as by placing cuts or holes therein. Painting, as by spray painting, may be provided at desired locations for further decorative effect.

5 In one embodiment, the decorative arrangement may be made on a supporting structure which becomes part of the decorative arrangement, such as a wire frame for a wreath or other supporting structure. In other embodiments, no such supporting structure is provided and a release surface which does not bond to the foam being employed.

10 The wet foam is preferably one which has sufficient viscosity to permit ready positioning and securement of decorative elements thereto in the wet form and subsequent drying producing a rigid foam which retains the decorative elements in the desired arrangement.

Among the preferred foam materials are polyurethane foam and latex foam which may advantageously be provided in an aerosol container.

15 It is an object of the present invention to provide an improved method for rapid creation of decorative arrangements while resisting undesired damage to the supporting foam material and the decorative elements.

It is yet another object of the present invention to employ a preformed rigid foam in combination with wet foam in producing a decorative arrangement of the present invention.

20 It is a further object of the present invention to provide such a method wherein a wide variety of decorative elements may be secured in numerous configurations with or without supporting structures.

It is a further object of the present invention to enable skilled or semiskilled workers to create a decorative arrangement in substantially reduced time, thereby permitting the decorative arrangements to be sold at a profit at a reduced price as compared with prior art
25 practices.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide such a method which facilitates sequential creation of decorative arrangements

It is another object of the present invention to provide a method of freely positioning a plurality of decorative elements in a supporting wet foam and firmly retaining said decorative
5 elements in the rigid foam.

These and other objects of the invention will be more fully understood from the following description of the invention on reference to the illustrations appended hereto.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

10 Figure 1 is a flow diagram showing an embodiment of the method of the present invention.

Figure 2 illustrates a release film usable in one embodiment of the method of the present invention.

Figure 3 illustrates spraying a release agent on a film.

15 Figure 4 illustrates employing an aerosol sprayer to deliver wet foam to the film.

Figure 5 illustrates a container having a support for receiving wet foam.

Figure 6 illustrates a film overlapped with the container.

Figure 7 illustrates applying a release agent to the film.

Figure 8 illustrates an aerosol delivering wet foam to the release film.

20 Figure 9 illustrates wetting the surface of the wet foam or nodule by a suitable spray.

Figure 10 illustrates a method of providing decorative elements in the surface of the nodule through a forming tool.

Figure 11 illustrates a nodule having a plurality of decorative elements secured thereto.

25 Figure 12 illustrates spray painting a portion of the nodule's surface to enhance the decorative effect.

Figure 13 illustrates wrapping of a decorative element around the exterior of the nodule.

Figure 14 illustrates a nodule having decorative spray paint applied thereto along with cuts therein.

5 Figure 15 shows a decorative arrangement having the nodule highly visible and containing living plant material.

Figure 16 is an exploded schematic view of a form of showing a group of components which may be assembled in a method of another embodiment of the invention.

10 Figure 17 shows an elevational view of a form of embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 18 is a bottom view of the structure shown in Figure 17.

Figure 19 is a top plan view of the structure shown in Figure 17.

Figure 20 is an elevational view of an arrangement produced by another method of the invention.

15 Figure 21 is a further modified version of another embodiment of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring to Figure 1 and a preferred embodiment of the method of the present invention, wet foam is delivered to a release surface 2, after which a liquid, such as water, is sprayed 4 on the foam surface. The foam is then shaped 6, after a partial cure, which may be a drying at ambient temperature or in an elevated temperature environment. Subsequently, liquid, such as water is sprayed 8 onto the foam surface. The partially cured foam is a "nodule" as defined herein. Either prior to full curing of the nodule or after, it may be decorated by altering the surface 10, such as by placing cuts or depressions in the surface, adding decorative elements, or spray painting portions of the nodule surface. Decorative

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elements 12, which may be living plants, dried plants, artificial plants and flowers, or other decorative elements 12 are inserted into the nodule prior to full curing. Subsequently, full curing is completed 14 with any desired additional decoration 16 being provided.

As employed herein, "decorative element(s)" means an element selected from the following group: (a) live flowers or other live vegetation, or (b) dried flowers or other dried vegetation, or (c) artificial flowers or other artificial vegetation.

The term "additional ornaments" means any desired additional decorative elements whether falling within categories (a), (b), (c) or independent such as ribbons, Christmas ornaments, containers for decorative elements, and other items which are or can be decorative in nature.

As used herein, "wet foam" means a moist resinous foam which receives decorative elements for a decorative arrangement and becomes rigid foam upon drying.

As used herein, the term "wreath" means a generally annularly shaped decorative arrangement regardless of whether it has an underlying wire support or other support apart from supporting foam.

As used herein, the term "preformed rigid foam" refers to a preformed rigid foam having a predetermined shape such as, for example, those sold under the trade designation "Ultrafoam" or "Oasis" which may be employed in the method of the present invention in combination with a material which is a wet foam as applied.

As used herein, the term "swag" means an elongated decorative arrangement regardless of whether it has an underlying supporting structure or no support apart from supporting foam.

In general, the method of this invention will be practiced on a release surface which will be nonbinding in respect of the wet foam and the rigid foam which will be produced. A convenient method of accomplishing this objective is either to provide a worktable surface,

which is generally nonbinding with respect to the foam, or to employ a plastic film or paper having such release properties. The foam may also be applied to a supporting structure which becomes part of the decorative arrangement.

Among the preferred wet foam materials are polyurethane foam and latex foam which may conveniently be dispensed from an aerosol container. Suitable polyurethane foams are those sold under the trade designation "Great Stuff" by the Dow Chemical Company and Touch'n Foam by Convenience Products of Fenton, Missouri.

When the wet foam partially cures or cures into a nodule, a thin skin forms on the exterior, thereby facilitating external decoration and providing additional holding power.

Referring to Figure 2, there is shown a suitable release film 20 which may provide the desired support for the wet foam (not shown in this view) while resisting adherence of the foam to the release film.

In Figure 3, an alternate film 26 which may lack the inherent release properties is employed with a suitable release agent 27 being dispensed thereon from an appropriate container.

Next, as shown in Figure 4, the wet foam 30 is dispensed from a suitable aerosol container 32 onto the surface of film 20. This wet film will, upon partial curing, become a nodule which is capable of being shaped and receiving decorative elements. As shown in Figures 5 and 6, a container 40 may be provided with a release film 42 which has portions extending over the exterior of the container and portions disposed within the container to receive a release agent 50 dispensed from aerosol container 52. After the release film is in suitable position, as shown in Figure 7, the wet foam 60 is applied by aerosol container 62 in whatever volume is desired for the particular work. Regardless of whether the wet foam 30 is applied to the surface of a film 20, as in Figure 4, or is applied within a container as in Figure 8, it is preferred that a liquid such as water 64 is sprayed on the nodule 66, as shown in Figure

9. This serves to help cure and aid in establishing a smooth skin surface for subsequent decoration, as by painting. Different textures in the nodule's surface may be provided in this manner. Other liquid such as acetone may be employed to establish other surface textures on the nodule. It will be appreciated that such spraying may take place at more than one time
5 during curing. It is preferred that the nodule be sprayed before inserting decorative elements into the nodule.

It will generally be preferred to shape the nodule about 8 to 10 minutes after the wet foam has been dispensed. Liquid, such as water, may be sprayed on the nodule before shaping, as well as after.

10 Figure 10 shows a nodule 70 which has at least partially cured and is provided with decorative depressions 72, 74, 76, 78 by knife 80.

One of the features of the present invention is to provide nodules which are sufficiently attractive as to be positioned within the decorative arrangement in a highly visible location, as contrasted with numerous prior systems wherein rigid plastic foam was
15 employed solely to purposes of retention of decorative elements, but was essentially completely hidden from view by either containers or the decorative elements or combinations thereof.

As shown in Figure 11, a support member 80 is secured to an overlying nodule 82 which is of irregular configuration and is provided with a plurality of decorative elements 84,
20 86, 88, 90, 92, 94. These may be living or dried plants, artificial plants or other desired elements. A plurality of slots, such as 100 and 102, are placed within the upper surface of the nodule for decorative effect.

As shown in Figure 12, a nodule 110 has a portion of its surface 112 covered by a decorative paint from aerosol spray container 114. The spray painting may be accomplished
25 within 8 to 12 minutes after the wet foam has been dispensed.

Referring to Figure 13, there is shown a nodule 120 having a pair of decorative elements 124, 126 and an elongated decorative wire or threadlike member 130 which is wrapped around the nodule after the nodule has completely cured or substantially completely cured.

5 Another manner of decorating the nodule is to employ a propane torch to create a charred effect or wood effect. This may be accomplished after partial curing and is preferably done after total curing. As shown in Figure 14, a torch 130 is employed to provide a flame 132 to the surface of nodule 136. Also, a knife 140 has provided cuts 142, 144, 146, 148 to the surface of the nodule.

10 Referring to Figure 15, a nodule 160 overlies and is supported by a transparent bowl 162 which contains water 164. The nodule is highly visible and forms an integral part of the attractive decorative arrangement. The nodule has a pair of decorative elements 170, 172, 174 which may be living, dried or artificial plants. It also contains a pair of living plants 180, 182 which respectively have roots 186, 188 entering water 164.

15 It will be appreciated that the method of the present invention may be employed to create the decorative arrangements sequentially. For example, an initial stage the creation of the foam portions with the associated decorative elements and subsequently additional foam areas may be created and decorated on the support structure. Further, after the foam portions have become rigid additional wet foam may be placed thereon to superimpose different
20 decorative elements thereon. .

While reference has been made herein to drying of the wet foam into rigid foam at ambient conditions, it is preferred that the decorative arrangement be created in an environment which is at a temperature of about 60°F to 100°F and that drying take place for at least 30 minutes with full drying taking about 4 hours. Whether drying is permitted to

occur at ambient temperature or is effected at an elevated temperature for convenience of reference herein, it will be referred to as drying the wet foam.

If a support structure is employed as part of a decorative arrangement, it will generally be preferred that it be substantially rigid so as to reinforce and protect the wet foam and the resultant rigid foam.

Referring to the embodiments shown in Figures 16 through 19 and another embodiment of the invention, a container 200 which may be a transparent or translucent container, if it is desired to have one observing the arrangement, see into the same, or may be opaque. It may be made of any suitable material such as glass, a synthetic resin, a ceramic or any other desirable material. In this embodiment, a support 202 which is preferably a performer rigid foam has a wet foam 206 applied thereto, preferably prior to complete setting of the wet foam material with subsequent introduction of the decorative elements 210, 212, 214, 216, 218 having their stems inserted into the wet foam 206 to thereby establish a decorative arrangement. If desired, the preformed rigid foam 202 may be wet such as by application of water prior to application of the wet foam 206 thereto. The final arrangement shown in Figures 17-19 has a transparent container 200 having water 220 therein to a desired level 221 has the lower stems 222, 224, 226 of living decorative elements 230, 232, 234, 236 extending thereinto for purposes of providing water and, if desired, nutrients thereto. Artificial decorative elements 248, 250, 252 are also anchored within wet foam 206 and may extend through wet foam 206 and into rigid foam 202. Water may be administered to the array for purposes of wetting the wet foam 206, the preformed rigid foam 202. In the alternative, one may lift rigid foam 202 off of container 200 to permit the water 220 to be replaced therein. Artificial flower 252 is also introduced into the rigid foam 202.

Referring to the embodiment shown in Figure 20, there is shown a dessert type container 260 which has a base 262 and an upwardly tapered annular wall 264. In this

embodiment, a plurality of layers of wet foam 270, 272, 274, 276 may be applied in various different colors and may be alternated with preformed rigid foam such as 280 with a preformed rigid foam 282 overlying the same and a wet foam layer 284 overlying the preformed rigid foam 282 with decorative segments of wet foam 290, 292 positioned therearound. In order to provide a dessert simulation, an artificial cherry 300 and a pair of flowers 302, 304 which may be real or artificial along with a straw 305 may be employed.

The preformed rigid foam 282 is preferably soaked in water prior to use as is traditional in respect to the Ultrafoam or Oasis type material previously referred to herein so as to sustain flowers 302, 304 if they are fresh flowers.

Referring to Figure 21, there is a further embodiment of the invention wherein a rigid foam block 330 has outer walls 336, 338, 340 and the corresponding fourth wall (not shown) so as to provide enhanced anchorage for the decorative arrangement. In this embodiment, a wooden branch 340 has its upper portion visible above container 330 and has a lower portion 342 passing through rigid foam 330. A further decorative element 334, which may be bamboo, for example, extends through the structure and a further decorative element 350 having portions 352 extending below downwardly. A moss-like decoration element 354 is also shown. It is contemplated that this would be positioned in a location overlying a container of water so as to provide water and, if desired, nutrients to the decorative articles. It will also be appreciated that the rigid foam 330 is provided as a support for the decorative articles with all or a portion thereof received within a wet foam 360 without using a separate container such as those shown in Figures 16 through 21.

It will be appreciated, therefore, that the present invention provides a rapid and effective means of creating a wide array of decorative arrangements through the use of wet foam to which there is secured a plurality of decorative elements, after which the foam dries

and becomes a rigid foam with the arrangement being secured in the desired configuration and of the desired appearance.

In another embodiment, a preformed rigid foam support for the wet foam arrangement may be provided.

5 Whereas particular embodiments of the invention have been described herein for purposes of illustration, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that numerous variations of the details may be made without departing from the invention as recited in the appended claims.